

Dear Friends:

Fifteen months ago, we began the journey to reform South Carolina's public schools. Our plan includes accelerating innovation, increasing public school choice, refining accountability for maximum results with minimum testing, elevating and reinvigorating the teaching profession, and providing fair and more equitable funding for schools.

As I've traveled across the state, I have been encouraged by the interest of people from all walks of life in our plan to improve and support our schools. I have also been particularly impressed by the contributions that parents, community members, and business and industry officials are making in classrooms and schools as public school volunteers.

For example last year, Jennifer Lyons Lyons dedicated more than 500 hours of service to Mauldin Elementary School in Greenville. She was vice-president of the school's PTA, served as a room mother, a classroom SEEDs volunteer, and co-chair of the school's Accelerated Reader program.

In Anderson School District Five, Sarah Sprague and Winfred Green are mentors at Homeland Park Elementary School. Sarah has served as a mentor and worked with language arts students. She assists in recruiting, monitoring, and evaluating both volunteers and the program. A mentor for five years, Winfred served on the School Improvement Council and helped to develop Friday Five Alive, a program to encourage fifth graders in achievement and attendance.

Members at Riverside Baptist Church in Greer have devoted over 3,100 hours to Riverside High School over the past two years. The church allows over 350 student vehicles to park on their premises 180 days each year, a donation of over \$10,500.

Volunteers like these and hundreds of others in every area of the state demonstrate that one person can make a difference. I hope that their contributions will inspire more adults to become involved in the lives of our young people.

There has to be a collective effort to ensure that every child can achieve his or her fullest potential. As we join the nation in observing Public School Volunteer Week next week, I salute all of our volunteers. Working together, we create schools that are second to none.

Sincerely,

Jim Rex
State Superintendent of Education